2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

rinse his eyes and pour a little water on his mouth. Thereupon the carriers lift him (the dead one) up and carry him three times round the pyre; when they have done this, they lift him up on the pyre; they put him down with his head towards the South. 764

The clothes of his body, necklaces, and loin-string they loose, rings, ear-rings, all of his they take off, the things sent with him they remove from him, and they cover his private parts with a branch, and they put down on him four pieces of wood, one on his breast, one on his stomach, one on his waist, and one on his feet; this they call covering wood.

The village men stand round the pyre. Any one whose wife is enceinte, stands some distance away. Now the ojha exorcizes them, waving the fowl mentioned three times round them; thereupon he nails the fowl to the pyre corner-post, and he cuts the bedstead and comes away from it. Thereupon the heir breaks off a sedge-culm and, uncoiling some threads of the fringes of the cloth of the dead one, he twists this round the sedge. Having kindled this he sets fire to the mouth of the dead one, while looking away to another side. This they call ag mukh[1]. [843]

Thereupon all the brothers and cousins first throw each one branch of firewood on the dead one; after them all the village men. Then they recite: Here then, we have all of us given thee one branch of firewood; do not keep us long, go like the wind. Thereupon they set fire to it round about. Thereupon they sit down together at a distance. Here one man shaves them. They are all shaved, and at the same time the dead one is cremated and finished. Now they quench the fire by pouring water on. When this is done, the heir rinses the bones with water and pours turmeric water and milk on them, and he puts them into an earthenware vessel. As we nowadays live very far away from the Damuda river, they put only the skull and collar bones, three pieces, into a small earthenware vessel. On this small vessel they place a potsherd, and in the middle of this there is a hole for the dead one to breathe; and into this hole they insert a crab-straw; on this the dead one wanders out and in. Round it they close it up by smearing on turmeric. The other bones, the ashes, and the charcoal they push out into the water of the river and immerse it there. When they pick up the bones, they sing[2]: [593] [605] [539]

Above the funeral pyre
The vulture is sweeping round;
My father's bones
Pick out for me.

Here, take it, vulture,
The gold in the ear,
My father's bones
Pick out for me.

[1] Ag means fire, mukh means mouth, both Hindi words. [2] In a corrupt form of Hindi.

[3] Cole Ethn. Mem. – Bodding.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

wing of the house serves the purpose. A midwife, a Santal woman of the profession, attends on the parturient woman with her elderly women-relatives. In cases of difficult delivery, *Ojha*s (exorcists) are summoned to perform rites so as to expel the ghosts, supposed to be creating difficulties.

When the child is born, the umbilical cord is severed by the midwife with a sharp iron weapon such as an arrow-blade. The baby is now bathed in tepid water and the navel-string buried near the main door of the room of its birth.

As regards ceremonial uncleanliness for the baby and its mother, the practice differs in different areas of Mayurbhanj. Some do not observe any segregation whatsoever; while others observe it for varying periods[1] from one to twenty-one days, during which they may not visit the room, touch the baby or its mother. The observance of this birth-pollution in some areas and its negation in others, throws a flood of light on the influence of others on their customs and manners. During her confinement, the mother is allowed to eat warm rice with salt, leaves of

1. On this point, Nabin Mañjhi, an old Santal said that custom requires that twelve days should be observed. But it has slackened and men now sometimes consider themselves ceremonially clean, immediately after a child-birth in the house.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Samal AW42

843 *Murài arak'* (an edible leaf, the radish, *Raphanus sativus*, Linn.), and garlic. The members of the family have no particular food-prohibition during this period.

844 783 184 In the Santal Parganas, the house and village become religiously unclean. No festivals or sacrifices are held in the village nor anybody dines in the house of child-birth till after purification, three or five days after, by the *chàṭiar* ceremony.

Narta (Name-giving Ceremony)

553 184 The usual Santal custom is to observe the name-giving ceremony between the third and fifth day after birth. But in Mayurbhanj, some observe it within one year, the date being fixed by the head of the family; while there are others, who may delay it up to the tenth year.

553 574 431 On the date of the ceremony being announced, friends and relatives of the family are invited. They arrive on the day fixed, with presents of rice, cloth, *hàṇḍia* (rice-Beer), necklaces of beads (*mala*) and *doṛa* (string worn round the waist, pronounced *dara* by Mayurbhanj Santals) for the new-born child. Now the midwife, who delivered the child, sits with the baby facing east, and with a leaf-cup in front, containing turmeric paste, *mohua* oil and water.

553 782 887 An old man of the village offers the rice-beer presented by others and mixed with the family

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1935-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
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833 fixed at once a day, till they arrive at their sixtieth year. All these are considered nothing unusual and such intercourse is not considered as too frequent.

[841] As regards ritual continence, coitus is stopped during menstruation for a period of seven days or [843] so. During pregnancy, the Santal gives up sexual intercourse when the woman is about her fifth month and resumes it about the third month after child-birth.

838 So far as the prevalence and censure of sexual deviations are concerned, we gathered that homo-sexuality is almost unknown amongst the Santals.

839 Masturbation is sometimes indulged in by boys while tending cows in the fields, but not much of attention is paid to these, as such cases are rare. Bestiality and sodomy are hated as abhorrent to human nature. Should such cases occur, the guilty ones are fined and a formal purification ceremony takes place. A Ṭika Murmu offers pujas to Marań Buru and parties previously outcasted are taken back to the tribal-fold after the penance.

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B Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (n.s. 1933-1939) 1962
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shot. They also take evidence as regards the first, second and third shots.

The rest of the meat is taken by the villagers of the man who had the first shot and shared among themselves. It is worthy of note that even the hunting dogs employed in the chase receive their shares equally with men. Generally, the meat that goes to X's share is carried by his villagers home. The head of the game shot is divided into two parts, the first going to X, the other to the villagers of X. The Headman of X's village gets the left hind leg (*donde*). This is also conveyed home by the villagers, who, in return, receive a pot of rice-beer, twelve seers of rice, five pieces of turmeric and some salt. It is customary for the men thus presented to cook a hotch-poteh with the head of the hunted animal previously received for a common meal.

[231]

In case an animal like a *Gayal* or *Sambar* (a species of deer like an elk) is hunted by, say ten or twelve men, custom lays it down that the first five hunters will only receive their shares.

It should be noted that if X's wife is pregnant, he will not get the head of the animal and it will go to the villagers to be shared by them. The *Dihri* gets a share of meat per each mouza of men who hunted the animals.

[843]
[793]

Another important feature deserves mention. It may be that in a *Deshua Sendra* there may be any

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4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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way : the husband is made to stand facing the sun on one leg (generally the left). He has a cloth round his neck each end of which is held in the hand along with three sal leaves. Then taking the name of Sin-Bonga he tears the sal leaves in token of separation and upsets a brass pot full of water. This is repeated by the wife also.[1]

586 [510] [824]

Birth and Naming Ceremony : When the Santal woman becomes pregnant, she and her husband observe certain taboos. The husband during his wife's pregnancy never kills any animal, nor participates in any funeral ceremony and does not come in contact with any dead body. The pregnant woman during the evening very rarely comes out of the house, she never crosses any streamlet, she does not weep when any death occurs of her relations. On the day of the moon-eclipse she does not come out of the room. She should not sit on the verandah with her hair or her cloth hanging down on the courtyard side. All these taboos signify that the Santals have a strong belief that malevolent spirits or witches do mischief to the pregnant women.

843 784 [821]

The Santals believe that after ten months the women give birth. When the labour pain starts the pregnant woman is confined in a room, which is generally a corner of the house or a portion of the verandah partitioned with bamboo and leaves. At birth, an experienced elderly woman of the village or of the adjoining village officiates as midwife. No one is allowed to remain there except one or two female relatives of the pregnant woman. After birth, the umbilical cord is

844 [842]

[1]There is a belief that if the sal leaves are not fully torn or the lota not wholly emptied then the couple must again come together.

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842 [595]

persuaded to take a second wife. Sometimes he may not be reluctant to take such a step for reasons quite unconnected with the need for children, though usually he is. In addition to supernatural aids there are known to be remedies for ensuring conception, and these are sought from the individuals to whom they belong. The secrets of these remedies are closely guarded. Bodding[1] has listed a number of those commonly known. My friend Bimu was in possession of a remedy which had to be taken by the patient during a menstruation period and which ensured the birth of a boy. "No one", he said, "would ask for a medicine to ensure the birth of a girl."

847 [842] [789]

Conversely, amulets are worn as contraceptives, and two different methods are used to induce abortion. One of these is to take drugs orally and the other is the highly dangerous method of piercing the womb with a stick inserted through the vagina. I have heard of the latter method being followed only by girls who wished to escape detection and who therefore could not ask anyone for medicine. Married women who resort to abortion are usually those who have already given birth to a large number of children. In one case which had fatal results for the mother she wished to avoid having a seventh child; another attempt which resulted in a serious illness for the mother, but which was otherwise successful, was made by a woman who had already had ten children.

842 843 [192]

Santals are fully aware of the connection between coitus and conception. From the time when pregnancy is suspected the child begins to exert its influence over the life of the home. A pregnant woman is called *poati*, this being the common Bengali term, but here too the Santal love of figurative speech finds full play, and other common ways of referring to pregnancy are to speak of a "full body" or a "heavy body" or to say that the woman is now "two souls". Many of the restrictions enjoined on the woman are due to the physical dangers that surround her during the period and at its climax. These dangers may be brought about not only through natural causes but also by the action of malignant spirits. Thus it is dangerous for a pregnant woman to go anywhere when the sun is directly overhead, nor does she go anywhere alone at sunset. She should not cross a river, though some of my informants affirmed that this prohibition applies only during a first pregnancy. She may not sit on the narrow ledge surrounding the house with her legs

[1] *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, Pt. II, "Santal Medicine".

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• 843 dangling or her hair loose or any portion of her clothing hanging loosely from her body. She must not walk over the straw rope that is used for binding bundles in which grain is stored. She may not take any life nor may she look upon a dead body. It is not good to look on the image of a god at a temple or in the home of a Hindu neighbour. Is this due to the fact that although the image has the semblance of life it is dead? She must not weep when a death occurs. If there should be an eclipse of the moon she must remain indoors, and she must not look at the moon even from the shelter of the house. All these restrictions are ascribed by the Santals themselves to the need for escaping the attention of ghosts, the unsatisfied souls of the dead.

[827] Other actions are enjoined or prohibited because of their effect on the appearance or the character of the child who is to be born, and so illustrate the Santal reaction to the observed facts of heredity, the mysterious "law" which can be seen operating in the likeness of a child to its parents. Thunder is dangerous, and when the mother hears thunder she clasps close to her abdomen the cylindrical grinding stone used for the grinding of spices in the preparation of curry. By so doing she guards against her child growing up to be afraid of thunder. Turmeric roots, also used in the preparation of curry, are frequently forked. If the mother is cooking she does not break off a forked piece lest her child be born with forked fingers. If she sees an elephant her child may be born with large flapping ears. If she sees a monkey she fears lest her child will be born with the wide nostrils in a sunken nose that are a simian characteristic and one that is not uncommon among the Santals. If she sees a snake the child may develop the habit of constant spitting. Then again, the pregnant woman's taste in food must be humoured. If her whims are denied her child may grow up with a mouth always watering and be known as a "slobberer". These precautions furnish a useful means of determining many of the physical and mental characteristics that are displeasing to the Santals. One informant related a case that had occurred in his own family of a child who

[845] was born without an anus. The women of the village discussed the phenomenon and cast round for the reason. They put it down to the fact that the mother must at some time while she was pregnant have eaten the flesh of the flying fox, the reason being the belief that flying foxes are without this feature in their anatomy. In this case, which happened about forty years ago, the child was thrown away in the jungle while it was still alive.

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BIRTH AND INITIATION

Society takes little notice of the child before it is born, but, through the person of the father, the family and the clan begin to assert their interests. The restrictions enjoined on the father suggest that although his rôle in the heredity of the child is considered to be a relatively minor one, he is nevertheless an instrument through which the future child may be brought into danger and so hurt the interests of the family. During the period of his wife's pregnancy he must strictly observe the rule against taking life and he must avoid all contact with dead bodies. He is therefore excused from all participation in funeral ceremonies; he may not help to carry a corpse or even enter a house in which a death has taken place. If the annual hunt falls during the period he is allowed to accompany the men of the village, but he is not allowed to kill or to carry a slain animal or bird. He must not eat flesh from the head of any animal slain in the hunt or offered in sacrifices.[1] He is not separated from his wife, and my information suggests that intercourse is usual up to about the sixth month. There is a very strong sentiment against a man having sexual intercourse with another woman during his wife's pregnancy. There appears to be no rule as to when intercourse may be resumed after the birth of the child. The women speculate concerning the sex of the coming child. If the mother begins to look sickly, and especially if she becomes thin round the neck, it is a sign that she will have a boy. Although the "quickening" is not marked by any ceremonial, it is recognized as a definite stage in the life of both the new individual and of the mother. When a woman dies with child the procedure to be followed varies according to whether the death has followed the first quickening or not.[2]

Midwives are engaged for the delivery. They are to be found in every large Santal village, and they are generally old women, themselves grandmothers. They receive no special training, but they develop the "knack" for their work by assisting others, and they launch out on their own practice when they have established a reputation for being handy and capable. The midwife may be someone connected with the family, but, if so, she should

[1] Bodding, in the *Santali Dictionary* (Vol. III, p. 137), reports a custom in connection with the *Jom Sim* festival which accords a certain status to the child before birth. I have been unable to confirm his statement. He says that when the *Jom Sim* is observed in the family of a pregnant woman she is served with two platefuls of rice because she is, or rather she represents, "two souls".

[2] The procedure to be followed in the former event and the reason underlying it have already been described in Chapter 8; see p. 92 above.

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this occasion they make use of *sarpa*, and the Christmas songs that they sing are set to *Sohrae* tunes, as Christmas falls into the harvest season. During the afternoon of Christmas Day sports are held. These attract large numbers of spectators, and the final item in the sports, an archery contest, has become established as one of the events of the countryside. The interest and enthusiasm of spectators and competitors, who gather year after year to display their skill, is out of all proportion to the value of the prize that is offered. When the sports end the people disperse, the Christians to feast in their own homes.

Good Friday is observed with great solemnity, and the majority of the adults fast until after they have attended church. The services are very well attended, and on the initiative of the people themselves new forms of celebration are frequently being introduced. In most of the local churches the three-hour service has established itself in the customs of the people. On Good Friday in 1946 at the village of Barikul the people decided to follow the service by a silent procession through the village street. They filed behind a "standard bearer" who carried a rude cross fashioned from two *sarjom* saplings. At Easter it is customary for the dawn to be greeted by bands of young men singing in the village and also at the local Christian burial ground. The day is also characterized by large and enthusiastic gatherings of worshippers. Little has been done in this area to "baptize" the magico-religious practices connected with agriculture, and although Harvest Festivals are celebrated by the bringing of thank-offerings to church and the decoration of the church buildings, they have not become times of community rejoicing and remembrance as have the historic occasions associated with the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of the Saviour.

In the customs that surround life's crises one sees the blending of old and new concepts and symbols. Pregnancy taboos are widely observed, and steps have to be taken by Christians to remove the uncleanness resulting from birth. The practice of "churching" women was not introduced to the people at the beginning and it has never been put in the forefront, but the Christians carry out the bathing and naming and the feasting of neighbours. In this they are joined in many cases by non-Christian villagers, though no two Christian occasions are alike in this respect. In some places most of the villagers gather, in other places all the women come, while at other villages only Christians collect. Something depends on the strength and persistence